DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 517 SP 032 844

AUTHOR Frame, Stanley M.
TITLE The Effect of Employment Location on Perceptions of Teaching Competencies among First Year Teachers.
PUB DATE Mar 90
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Followup Studies; *Geographic Location; Graduate Surveys; Higher Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Planning; Program Evaluation; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Employment; *Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

Thoughtful follow-up studies of teacher education program graduates can be used effectively. In the study reported here, survey data were collected from recent graduates (N=151) of a small, independent, church-related liberal arts college. The students were participating in their first year of teaching in one of four geographic regions (Idaho, California, Oregon, and Washington). The questionnaire asked for perceptions of teacher competencies: in communication skills; ability to understand diverse students; abilities in lesson planning, preparation, presentation, and evaluation; classroom management; and other skills and abilities expected of beginning teachers. The independent variable was the geographic location of the respondent. Findings indicated that the teachers were generally quite positive about their training. Competencies in planning were rated highest, followed by communication/empathy, instructional effectiveness, and behavior/records management. ANOVA calculations indicated that the region of employment had a statistically significant effect on perceptions of competencies in behavior/records management and communications/empathy. Next steps in the study and recommendations for other institutions are presented. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED327517

THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYMENT LOCATION ON PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING COMPETENCIES AMONG FIRST YEAR TEACHERS

Stanley M. Frame, Ed.D.
Professor of Education
Northwest Nazarene College

Higher education is being called upon to be much more diligent in program evaluation and product assessment. Standards for both the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 1990) and the National Council for Accreditation of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC, 1989) call for systematic evaluation, including follow-up studies of program graduates.

Simultaneously, teacher educators are criticized for inadequate research - both in production and in informed application. From their perspectives as editors of the recent Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, Houston et al. note that ". . . numerous glowing accounts of teacher education programs and their unproven outcomes clog the literature . . . " (1989, p. 22). Follow-up studies of graduates were specifically criticized by Katz and her colleagues (1981).

However, thoughtful follow-up studies are still generally recommended in teacher education research models (Katz and Raths, 1985; Zimpher and Ashburn, 1985). The critical concerns seem to center on both asking the right questions and doing something constructive with the results. This article reports on a five-year follow-up study of first-year graduates of a teacher education program. The results should be useful to other colleges or universities conducting or considering similar follow-up evaluations.

Background and Problem

Northwest Nazarene College (NNC) is a small, independent, church-related liberal arts college located in Nampa, Idaho. Four-year teacher education and Masters-level graduate programs are NCATE accredited and state approved for the preparation of both elementary and secondary school teachers.

The research reported here was part of an outcomes assessment of the teacher education program. The purpose of this study was to analyze perceptions of graduates as they were self-reported toward the end of their first year of teaching. This analysis sought to discover (1) the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program and (2) what effect geographic region of employment may have had on such perceptions. The study was limited to those geographic regions where there were enough survey respondents to support analysis.

SP 032 844

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. M. Frame

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Method and Subjects

During the academic years 1985 through 1989, a total of 232 persons graduated in elementary or secondary education and received institutional recommendation for certification. Most of these teachers accepted employment by September following their graduation. Each Spring, a questionnaire was distributed to the previous year's graduates who were in their first year of teaching. Over this five year period, 190 forms were distributed and returned.

The problem statement suggested three criteria for inclusion in this study. Alumni were selected who were: (1) in their first year as classroom teachers, (2) employed within the states of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, or California, and (3) graduates in the classes of 1985-1989. Of the 190 responses, 151 subjects (79% of the available forms; 65% of the total graduates) qualified.

The study design was hampered by a relatively small sample size (even though a high percentage of the total graduates responded). The process of identifying and selecting geographic regions was influenced by the distribution of subjects. The goal was to achieve a minimum of 25 to 30 subjects in each region. Further explanation of the geographic location variable is presented in the next section. Table 1 displays the distribution of these respondents.

Table 1
Distribution of Subjects
By Geographic Region and By Year of Graduation

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
Nampa, Idaho	7 (24%)*	2 (7%)	6 (21%)	4 (12%)	8 (25%)	27 (18%)
Other Idaho	11 (38%)	12 (43%)	8 (29%)	12 (35%)	16 (50%)	59 (39%)
Wash./Oregon	5 (17%)	8 (29%)	6 (21%)	10 29%)	5 (16%)	34 (22%)
California	6 (21%)	6 (21%)	8 (29%)	8 (24%)	3 (9%)	31 (21%)
Total	29	28	28	34	32	151

* Figures in parenthesis are percentage calculations for column.

The questionnaire items asked for perceptions of preparation based on several teaching competencies. The items asked the graduate to indicate, on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale (unsatisfactory to superior), a perception of his/her own competencies as a beginning teacher using the lead, "How well did your course of study at N.N.C. prepare you:". The items included such topics as communication skills; ability to understand diverse students; abilities in lesson planning, preparation, presentation, and evaluation; classroom management; and some other skills, abilities and understandings expected of beginning teachers.

Independent Variable

The independent variable was the geographic location of the respondent. The question asked of our data was, "Do our graduates who find employment in various geographic regions perceive the quality of their preparation differently?" Essentially, this was a lead question which could point to the need for more detailed analyses. The first step was to discover whether such variances existed and to what extent.

Four groups were selected for analysis as follows:

1. Nampa, Idaho. This is the town (population 26,000) in which the college is located and the primary, but not exclusive, school district in which most field experiences and student teaching assignments are conducted.

2. All other Idaho districts. Due to the proximity of other districts within 30 miles of the campus (Meridian, Caldwell, and Boise), many graduates find employment in the greater Treasure Valley. These districts are similar to the Nampa district in philosophy and demographics. Some student teaching and other field placements also occur here.

3. Washington and Oregon. The college draws students primarily from the Northwest. Many of its students come from these two states and declare early in their program their intention to return to their "home states". College personnel work to stay abreast of state licensing regulations and often institutional program changes are implemented to help students qualify for appropriate credentials. Teaching opportunities, district characteristics, and compensation are similar for these states.

4. California. An increasing percentage of graduates are recruited to this state due to significantly higher starting salaries and many teaching vacancies. District characteristics and student demographics undoubtedly varied among alumni and current data did not allow meaningful distinctions along such criteria as urban/rural, ethnicity, and instructional philosophy.

Dependent Variables

The 22 items on the survey instrument were subjected to factor analysis [1]. Four factors were identified.

Factor 1: "Communication/empathy". This group, composed of five items on the survey form, described perceptions of skills of oral and written communication, listening, reflecting dignity and worth of others, and effectively presenting directions for instructional activities.

Factor 2: "Behavior/records management". Four items of the survey form contributed to this underlying group. Those items assessed perceptions of abilities to identify student misbehavior, formulate standards for correct behavior, develop adequate record keeping, and adequately assess student performance.

Factor 3: "Instructional effectiveness". Three items referenced meeting instructional needs of students; understanding physical, social, and academic development of students; and self-evaluating personal instructional effectiveness.

Factor 4: "Planning". Two survey items asked about abilities in identifying long-range goals, developing instructional units, and writing objectives and appropriate daily lessons.

Results

Overall, graduates rated their own preparation highest in Factor 4: "Planning" (Mean = 4.57), followed by Factor 1: "Communication/empathy" (Mean = 4.31), then Factor 3: "Instructional effectiveness" (Mean = 3.83) and finally Factor 2: "Behavior/records management" (Mean = 3.80). Recall that one is "unsatisfactory" and five is "superior" on the rating scale. See "All Responses" in Table 2.

As a quick check to rule out a possible explanation of variance, the data were disaggregated by year of graduation. The means and standard deviations showed a fairly consistent pattern within each factor of teaching competency by year of graduation and ANOVA calculations indicated non-significant F tests for every factor.

The independent variable was region of employment. Means and standard deviations of scores on the four factors of teaching competencies showed less consistency across this variable. In each factor, California-employed graduates registered the lowest mean score when compared with the other three regions. See Table 2.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of
Factors of Teaching Competencies
By Categories of Region of Employment

	Region of Employment	Mean	Std. Deviation
Factor 1: Communication/empathy			
	Nampa	4.59	.64
	Other Idaho	4.29	.62
	Wash./Oregon	4.24	.55
	California	4.16	.58
	All Responses	4.31	.62
Factor 2: Behavior/records management	Region of Employment	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Nampa	3.74	.98
	Other Idaho	3.91	.66
	Wash./Oregon	3.94	.61
	California	3.45	.72
	All Responses	3.80	.71
Factor 3: Instructional effectiveness	Region of Employment	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Nampa	3.96	.82
	Other Idaho	3.86	.73
	Wash./Oregon	3.74	.79
	California	3.61	.72
	All Responses	3.83	.75
Factor 4: Planning	Region of Employment	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Nampa	4.48	.70
	Other Idaho	4.61	.53
	Wash./Oregon	4.64	.55
	California	4.45	.68
	All Responses	4.57	.58

The effect of region of employment on perceptions of teaching competencies was calculated using ANOVA. Statistical significance (expressed as probability) was determined by calculating the F ratio comparing the variation across groups with the variation within groups. The factor with the most significant probability level (.023) was Factor 2: "Behavior/records Management". Next was Factor 1: "Communications/empathy" (.042). Factor 3: "Instructional Effectiveness" and Factor 4: "Planning" were non-significant. Table 3 presents these data.

Table 3
Factors of Teaching Competencies and Region of Employment
Analysis of Variance Results:
Probability Levels

Factor	Probability Level
1. Communication/empathy	.042
2. Behavior/records Mgmt.	.023
3. Instructional Effect.	n.s.
4. Planning	n.s.

Discussion

The first general impression is that the graduates of the teacher education program at N.N.C. report very positive perceptions of teaching competencies. They feel very competent in areas of planning and communication, and rate quite highly the competencies of instructional effectiveness and behavior/records management. But, such impressions must be interpreted carefully.

The recognized "halo effect" is present. Very few respondents marked many items below the mid-point on the scale. Mean scores should be interpreted contextually; that is, relative to the other scores. Graduates rate their competencies higher in the first two areas mentioned than in the latter two. See Table 2.

Although most students had been resident on the campus at least four years, had shared generally small classes together, and had completed field experiences and student teaching in the same few districts near the campus; still they reported differences (based on employment location) in perceptions of competencies. The effect of employment location on perceptions of competencies was significant for two factors: "Behavior/records management" and "Communications/empathy". The mean scores for these factors indicate that California-employed alumni scored them lowest.

The current data base and collection process do not permit analysis to determine why. A few explanations may be suggested: different student/community demographics than those of their training sites; different models of instruction and class control; or perhaps less first year support from within the district than experienced by teachers at other locations.

As stated at the onset, the first task was to determine whether regional variations existed. Now that this has been demonstrated, two changes will be made in next year's study:

1. The questionnaire will be refined based on factor analysis. Items dropped because of low factor loadings (see Reference Note below) will be left out of the next edition of the survey form. The 14 items included in this study will remain for continuity.

2. Data collection will include demographic data on the school district and the school of the graduate. Classifications of rural/urban, socioeconomic level, and ethnic diversity will be included in future forms.

Recommendations

College or university teacher education departments may gain from this study by considering the following recommendations:

1. Use the same data collection instruments long enough to gain a sample size large enough for analysis (usually at least 25 to 30 per cell).
2. Refine the instrument through factor analysis so that unneeded items (those that do not discriminate) may be discarded and an essential core of items be retained.
3. Do not hesitate to add reasonable identifying data requests that can aid further analysis.

Reference Note

[1] All statistical computations were performed with the MicroCase Analysis System. Principal axis factor analysis was performed using Varimax rotation. Items with factor loadings below .4 were dropped. Overall, four factors emerged, comprised of 14 items, which explained slightly over 50% of the variance. Additional information on statistical treatment is available from the author.

References

Houston, W. R., Haberman, M., & Sikula, J. (1989). Teacher education as a field of scholarly inquiry. *Action in teacher education, 11 (2), 19-24.*

Katz, L. G., Raths, J. D., Mohanty, C., Kurachi, A., & Irving, J. (1981). Follow-up studies: Are they worth the trouble? *Journal of Teacher Education, 31 (2), 18-24.*

Katz, L. G., & Raths, J. D. (1985). A Framework for Research on Teacher Education Programs. *Journal of Teacher Education, 36 (6),* 9-15.

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education & Certification (1989). *Standards for State Approval of Teacher Education.* Salt Lake City, UT: NASDTEC.

National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (1990). *Standards, Procedures, and Policies for the Accreditation of Professional Education Units.* Washington, D.C.: NCATE.

Zimpher, N. L. & Ashburn, E. A. (1985). Studying the professional development of teachers: How conceptions of the world inform the research agenda. *Journal of Teacher Education, 36 (6), 16-26.*